



**COMSECNDFLT Public Affairs**  
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**C2F 06-46MA**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**DEC 1, 2006**

## ***Iwo Jima ESG Returns to Homeport***

Norfolk, VA—Over 2,000 Sailors from the Iwo Jima Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG) will return to Hampton Roads Dec. 6 after conducting maritime security operations in support of the ongoing rotation of forward-deployed forces. Iwo Jima ESG deployed June 6 and has supported operations in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Fleet areas of responsibility (AOR).

USS Iwo Jima (LHD 7) provided humanitarian support in Lebanon in which their efforts safely evacuated 14,000 American citizens.

Throughout this deployment the ships from the Iwo Jima ESG supported the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable (MEU(SOC))) as they participated in bilateral and multilateral training initiatives, including the exercises Infinite Moonlight '06 and Inspired Union '06.

The strike group consists of the amphibious assault ship USS Iwo Jima (LHD 7), the amphibious transport ship USS Nashville (LPD 13), the guided missile destroyers USS Cole (DDG 67) and USS Bulkeley (DDG 84) - all homeported in Norfolk, Va.; and the dock landing ship USS Whidbey Island (LSD 41), homeported at Naval Amphibious Base Little Creek, Va. The more than 300 Sailors of the guided missile cruiser USS Philippine Sea (CG 58), which is

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also part of the Iwo Jima ESG, will be returning to their homeport of Naval Station Mayport, Fla. on Dec. 8.

This deployment marked the first time USS Cole returned to the 5<sup>th</sup> Fleet AOR since the bombing attack on the destroyer in October, 2000.

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**NOTE: Media desiring more information about this event should contact the Second Fleet Public Affairs Office at (757) 443-9850 (x47127) by Monday at 3 p.m.**

**Media wishing to cover the return of ships to Norfolk should meet at the Tour and Information office of Hampton Blvd. on Wednesday Dec 6 at 6:00 a.m. Advance notification is required for access to the Naval Station.**

**Media interested in covering the return of USS Whidbey Island to Little Creek should contact Senior Chief Mike Viola at (757) 636-0380.**